

January 24, 2006

California Energy Commission Dockets Unit  
Attn: Docket No. 00-REN-1194  
1516 Ninth Street, MS-4  
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

RE: Draft 2006 Renewable Energy Investment Plan, Docket #00-REN-1194  
Via Email

Dear Energy Commission:

NorCal Solar is the states longest-standing solar education organization, and on behalf of the Board of Directors I am submitting comments on the "Consumer Information and Market Support Program," as described in Chapter 5 of the draft Renewable Energy Investment Plan.

We support the proposed budget increase to 4 percent of the RRTF to fund the Consumer Information and Market Support Program (CIMSP). The proposed \$6 million/year budget is a minimum to support the following objectives on a statewide basis. We would like to see a CIMSP that meets the following objectives, which are described a bit differently than those listed in the CIMSP program description:

- Creating an educated consumer base, with special focus on developer/builders who have the capacity to install megawatts each year on more than 100,000 new homes.
- Supporting a climate of quality assurance in the PV industry, including education about best-business practices along the entire project delivery chain (e.g. equipment, sales, design/engineering, installation, warranties, and end users.)
- Creating a flexible and effective education program that sustains a growing solar industry, and that can easily adjust to marketplace fluctuations and consumer demand.

We also suggest including specific support for *solar equipment owners/end-users*. It's a market reality that bad news from early adopters about a technology will travel faster and farther than a plethora of positive experiences. Thousands of solar hot water systems installed in the early 1980's (springing from an incentive program), are now being removed each year, far more often than being replaced. The CIMSP should initially include (at minimum) funding to research the 5-year progress of solar equipment owners who installed systems in 2000 to find out if there are a significant number of disappointed early adopters that need support. Beyond researching problems issues to nip them in the bud, a Solar Owner Support program would greatly reduce the chance that a few bad experiences could widely poison the atmosphere for solar.


### Summary

NorCal Solar and its regional partners have coordinated Solar Home Tours throughout Northern California for the last seven years. Lessons about public education and inspiring people to 'go solar' include:

1. In-person and demonstrative educational experience are by far the strongest and long-lasting.
2. No matter what the information is, consumers give more credence to non-commercial sources than sources with a profit motive.
3. The most effective educational programs include local information and resources. NorCal Solar has wide experience supporting and working with local entities to help them effectively promote solar technology.
4. The need for flexible, accurate, informative, non-commercial educational materials and resources is paramount to successfully implementing and educating both the solar industry and their consumer base.

We look forward to discussing the CIMSP with program administrators at the upcoming workshops, and we support the current overall framework described by the draft Renewable Energy Investment Plan, Chapter 5.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Liz Merry".

Liz Merry  
Executive Director

Cc:  
Claudia Wentworth, President, NorCal Solar